

## CHAPTER 198

November 11, 2011

“He said what?”

Justin nodded a bit with both confirmation and annoyance. He was still pretty pissed off from the day prior; after all, how dare someone lie to him about his father like that. It annoyed him to no end that he had been going around on a wild goose chase for at least a month now just so someone could lie to him. Had he known that was going to be his reward for solving the mystery, he would have never involved himself. It was made worse by the fact that it was a man who had considered trustworthy; someone who had been so close to his family. And he had the audacity to twist a dagger that had long been dug into Justin’s heart. You know what Justin said? Good riddance. Chie scratched her head a bit with great confusion as Justin recapped the events of the day prior to her. Both Chie and Kurt were currently hanging around Justin’s house. It was going to just be Kurt, but as it turns out, Kurt had nothing better to do today but bug Justin; and well... it wasn’t like Kurt was bad company to have around. It was just a little strange that a twenty year old man never seemed to want to hang around with people his own age. He was like a child at heart; if said child was a tobacco peddler. That said, they were pretty much having this chat over video games; Playstation All-Stars more precisely, where Justin was getting his ass kicked hard. He never was much good at fighting games.

“Your... dad is alive?” Chie questioned after a moment. She wasn’t sure how she should feel about the news to be quite honest. To know that your family was still alive must have been like a miracle come true, and yet... did Justin even want his father back? Chie had never heard him utter a good thing about his father; only stories about how much of a shitty excuse for a human being he was. She didn’t mind listening to Justin bitch and moan about his dad either. I mean, yeah, it kind of made her heart listening to his tales, but she wanted nothing more than to be there for the blond haired boy... whether it be giving him a helping hand, or just being there to listen. So she’d put up with the heartache knowing deep down she was making a difference. Justin again shook his head. Seemed that point Justin was making had gone completely over her head. He wasn’t saying that what Benedict had told him was true; in fact it was pretty clear bullshit. He was even THERE when they told him his father was dead. Hell, he was one of the people that delivered the news. No, he just felt like being a smartass; and Justin wasn’t going to have any of that shit.

“No he’s not. Benedict just felt like being an asshole in his old age I guess.” Justin sighed with disappointment. He’d like to blame this whole incident on senility, but that didn’t really justify coming all the way from America to Japan. Really, neither did being a prick, but from the sounds of it, he and Naoto’s grandfather had

business with each other to attend to, not to mention Naoto ended up getting dragged into this shit as well. He was probably just here in regards to Shirogane, but figured he might as well screw around with Justin while he was here. "You know, it takes a special kind of douchebag to mock someone's death."

"No kidding. You know, I knew a guy kinda like that in college." Kurt remarked, not so much as taking his gaze away from the screen as he leaned every which way in time to the game. As if tilting his whole body to the left was going to help him dodge or anything. Justin supposed that if you were losing as much as Kurt though, you'd be doing the same thing. Chie was kicking the two's asses as if she had done nothing but played this game for her entire life. Which she damn well might have; Justin would have to remind himself to check her Playstation 3 collection the next time he snuck in through her window to play video games. It was amazing that her father still hadn't caught Justin doing that... But then, he only did it once a month or so... prior to the tree branch breaking that is. But we're getting sidetracked here. Justin passed Kurt a glance of curiosity; just long enough for Kurt to land a super on Justin and send him flailing all the way back to last place. "Booyeah!" Kurt fist pumped with excitement before actually acknowledging Justin's curiosity. "Yeah, the guy didn't pretend a dead guy was alive or anything, but he did fake his mother dying to get sympathy sex. Needless to say when news got out that he was bullshitting... well... he had a lot of explaining to do."

"Ugh... what a sleeze." Chie remarked with disgust, sticking her tongue out to try and get the sour taste such a horrible image had left in her mouth. She couldn't believe there were people put there that desperate just to get laid. Even worse was the thought that people actually gave him what he wanted. Kurt just nodded a bit as he turned his attention back to the game... and immediately got killed by Chie. Again. Justin and Chie smirked a bit, chuckling under their breath at Kurt's bafflement. He thought Raiden was supposed to be a broken killing machine, not Chie's bitch. It was a wonder he didn't throw the controller into the ground beneath him in his anger.

"Goddammit." Kurt sighed with aggravation. He was doing pretty good for a guy who didn't play videogames that much, you know, with him being a working adult and all, but all the same he was fairly shitty at the game, and that was slowly getting on his nerves. Never challenge gamers at what they do best apparently. Though, despite how degrading it was to lose a child's game to children (yeah, kind of the point champ) he was having something resembling fun, so he couldn't complain to much. He'd just have to suck it up and focus all his energy on fucking Chie up the ass... Uh... in the game I mean. "So wait, this happened at the shopping district?"

"Yep. You know, for such a small place, the shopping district really is the life of this town." Justin mused to himself for a brief moment. People were always complaining about Junes running small businesses out of town, but really; how could they be

afraid of Junes when pretty much everything that happened in this place happened around the shopping district. Plus they had Aiya's, and while Justin was quite frankly sick of Japanese food by this point (joke's on him; he'll have to live with it for at least another two years,) Aiya's was a pretty cool place to hang out. And as long as kids were hanging out around there, they were going to have no problems attracting business. Justin only regretted that half the time it felt like the life of this town wasn't really great activity. So far Justin had seen muggings, crimes, bad cops trying to make faulty arrests, and a fox that may or may not have had rabbies. But then, some of those things while shitty in their own right, did lead to something much greater for Justin and Chie; so he wasn't going to bitch and moan. He was actually kind of grateful in a strange way.

"No kidding! Did you hear the news the other day?" Kurt spoke almost frantically. Justin wouldn't call it excitement as much as it was shock, perhaps even just alarm. Truth be told it was pretty shocking news for a small town like this; even if it was hard for the Investigation Team to be fazed by this kind of stuff ever since the murders started to happen. You know, Inaba was actually a pretty peaceful place prior to Justin's arrival. Sometimes you had to wonder if he brought trouble with him when he moved here. They didn't have murders or muggings or anything like that before he showed up, and while it was of course a mere coincidence, you had to feel bad that Justin had such shitty luck as to arrive right when everything went to shit. It would have been nice if he arrived when everything was right as it should be. And yet, even with all the shit hitting the fan as of recent, Justin couldn't care less. He loved this town and he loved the people in it. They were all... mostly likeable and down to earth people; and that was something Justin could get used to. Plus it was far less crowded in the country side; which was always a plus for him.

"You know I don't watch TV." Justin remarked sarcastically. It wasn't a completely untrue statement; he watched SOME television, but only reruns of shows that were long off the air. Whose Line, Scrubs, that kind of stuff. And he only did it when he had nothing better to do. The news never really made its way into Justin's television viewing time for a number of reasons really. The first and foremost was that truth be told, he actually didn't give a crap about what happened in the world around him. War, celebrity scandals, drunk driving accidents; he had heard it all before on the television, and never had it affected his life in any significant way. All that mattered to him was what had happened within a close circle of events relevant to his own life: family, friends, that kinda stuff. The second reason the news never really found a place in Justin's life was simply that he had friends who were willing to watch the news, and friends who were willing to recap anything important or interesting to Justin while leaving out pretty much everything else. It was like an abridged version of the news, which was great in a lot of ways. Thirdly... well... the news was boring. There was no doubt about that. And the whole political agenda thing that most news stations had going for them just went to annoy Justin. Not exactly great incentive to get Justin to watch your propaganda.

"Ohhhh yeaaaaah... I think I remember hearing something happening down there yesterday." Chie spoke up, something about Kurt's shock itching the back of her brain the wrong way. She wasn't exactly big on the news herself, but it was pretty much being broadcast on every local channel last night, so she caught bits and pieces of it here and there. It was a shame she couldn't remember much of it though... How in god's name was her memory this bad that she was forgetting news as big as this.

"Apparently there was a shooting down at the shrine. A couple of people reported hearing guns being discharged." Kurt explained for the two, since they seemed to be entirely clueless about stuff they should know about. He didn't need those two walking down the wrong alleyway and getting their heads blown off after all. They needed to know when dangerous stuff like this happened in their town. Justin's eyes widened slightly as the explanation hit his ears. A shooting in Inaba? Who the hell here even had guns besides the police and Justin? Hell, Justin didn't even have a gun anymore since Chie had been so kind as to kick his pistol off of a cliff and into the abyss. Still, given that he just sort of waltzed into an ironworks and bought a pistol without any sort of gun license, he wouldn't be surprised if everyone and their mother had a gun. But more than that... something about this seemed so familiar.

"You know... I think I heard that too." Justin mused to himself. "I thought it was just someone dropping something heavy... But wait... You said this happened at the shrine?" Kurt nodded a bit with confirmation, though that was interrupted by him muttering obscenities under his breath as Chie sent him straight back to hell. Again. In the game. Chie of course was giggling like a child who had just been given candy; after all, nothing tasted sweeter than victory. "But... I heard that noise right after I left the shrine.... You don't think...?" Justin remarked with concern. Don't get him wrong, he still thought Benedict was a complete douchebag, but the fact of the matter was he was still a human being, and the possibility of him taking a bullet to the chest was... well... horrifying. Even worse perhaps was the fact that had Justin stuck around for much longer that could have included him... and to a lesser extent Naoto. Okay, it wasn't fair of Justin to say he didn't care if Naoto got shot. He did. Just not as much as he did himself getting shot. If anyone had to die, he'd rather it be someone he hated. Kurt shook his head a bit though, dropping his controller as if to give up before shuffling his hands into his pocket and grabbing a hold of a cigarette.

"Want one?" Kurt questioned out of respect. Justin just shook his head a bit, passing a quick glance Chie's way all the while. He didn't want to make a big deal about how he quit, especially when he quit for her. When you do something for others, you don't try to make it about yourself after all... So he'd keep quiet about how he had quit smoking or how he did it because he cared about how Chie would feel if something happened to him. He was content enough knowing that what he was doing would make a difference. And besides... it wasn't like he didn't slip a smoke in here and there when shit got really tense. In fact, given all that had been going on,

he might have actually considered this grounds to have a smoke. But he was going to try and fight it, if only because he could feel Chie's eyes upon him as Kurt offered him a cigarette.

"No thanks, I'm good." Justin declined non-chalantly, a quick wave of his hand in an attempt to dismiss Kurt's attempts at drugging him up on tobacco. Kurt just shrugged a bit before placing the cigarette between his lips and lighting up the tube of tobacco, taking a deep breath of the poisonous smoke before exhaling. He didn't smoke much myself, but he did smoke from time to time. And getting his ass kicked by children seemed like a good enough time as any to try and calm his ass down.

"Alright suit yourself." Kurt shrugged a bit as he let the smoke fill his lungs and flow out his nostrils. "They didn't actually find any bodies. No blood or anything like that, but I think they found a couple of bullet shells. I'd write it off as a bunch of kids with nothing better to do than cause a panic. I wouldn't worry about it." Kurt continued to recap what he heard from the news. Justin nodded a bit, mouth still slightly open all the while. No blood? Then he was probably right; Justin couldn't imagine anyone being able to clean blood stains off of grass or dirt; and even if you could, the amount of blood splatter that came from piercing someone's organs with a bullet was surely more than one could just track down and clean up. You'd have to be a professional, knowing exactly where every little speck of blood had fallen to get rid of all that evidence. Justin sighed with relief after a moment, a slow smile creeping across your face.

"Yeah, you're right... Pfft, probably just Benedict being an asshole again." Justin shrugged off the alleged shootings that had occurred. Without any proof that there had been any death in the shrine, it sounded like one big prank; either that or a bunch of teenagers with too much time on their hands. Justin only felt like an idiot for considering the possibility that something bad had actually happened there. He should have known that Benedict wasn't going to go down just like that. He was old, but he still had some killer reflexes. He wasn't taking a bullet anytime soon, as much as part of Justin wished he would after the shit he had pulled yesterday. Oh well, karma was a bitch; and what goes around comes around. He'd get what was coming to him eventually. But until then, Justin was more than content to just hang back and chill out with his friends. The murders were over, and the case was solved... Now it was time to live life to the fullest. And Justin couldn't ask for more than he had now. He had friends... he had a family now that Maya had returned to his life... and he had Chie. That was all he ever needed. That was all he ever wanted. "Alright, I demand a rematch. One v One, no items, one stock, Final Destination."

"Justin, that's Smash Brothers."

"What's the difference?"